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ABSTRACT

This study examined links between early adolescent exposure to entrepreneurial gang activity and later criminal justice, economic, and social outcomes, comparing the social and behavioral outcomes of young people with active gang involvement and their non-gang affiliated counterparts. Participants came from a concentrated poor, predominantly African American community with a long history of street gang presence. In 1990, researchers began gathering information on the activities of all households in this a large, very poor, Chicago public housing community. In 1991, they documented 118 male youth living in the community, of whom 38 were active gang participants. These youth were followed over time. In 2000, researchers were able to contact 90 surviving members of the original sample and reconstruct their economic and social histories. Data on economic, criminal justice, and social justice outcomes came primarily from self-reports provided in structured interviews conducted in 2000. Results indicated that gang involvement had a negative impact on adolescent and young adult development, particularly in terms of years of education, employment, and social mobility. Gang members had greater exposure to the criminal justice system, and their future income tended to derive disproportionately from illegal sources as compared with their non-gang counterparts who tended to be involved in socially legitimated work. (Contains 16 references.) (SM)

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JCPR Working Paper 250

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The Social Outcomes of Street Gang Involvement

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Introduction

Studies of criminal behavior have demonstrated both that there is a career component to criminality and that key turning points in the life course can have large and potentially long-term impacts on criminal involvement (Sampson and Laub 1993). For inner-city youth, the decision to join a gang is considered to be one of the most important decisions. Sociologists and criminologists both cite the early contemplation of, and experimentation with, gang involvement as one of the most critical turning points in determining subsequent involvement in crime and the criminal justice system. With the emergence of entrepreneurial gang activity during in the mid-1980s, the street gang began offering young people living in the socially disadvantaged environments a novel set of attractions. Like the gangs of earlier eras, the recent variants provided social support, but unlike its predecessors, there were now opportunities for material gain. While the popularized images in film and media of widespread wealth being attained by youth and young adult gang members were somewhat exaggerated, the gang did make inroads into narcotics, extortion and other illicit economic activities. Although the exact percentage is a matter of great debate among scholars (see Klein 1995) and recent studies have suggested that only the leadership is procuring great wealth (Levitt and Venkatesh 2000), some proportion of the membership of large, urban street gangs did experience significantly enhanced revenue generation and purchasing power. Researchers of gangs display far greater consensus as to the dangerous nature of these new urban economies, with recent studies showing increasing numbers of youth being exposed to previously unparalleled risk of injury, death, and arrest (Thornberry et al. 1994, Spergel 1995, Kennedy et al. 1996, Levitt and Venkatesh 2000). Extended tenure in the gang has become a pressing social policy issue.

The popular concern over the exposure of young, inner-city residents to dangerous gang-related activities such as drug trafficking and drive-by shootings has not been matched by social scientific research on the long-term consequences of involvement in the so-called "corporate" gangs. Little systematic research has been conducted on the long-run impact of adolescent corporate street gang participation for future social, educational, and occupational outcomes (Spergel 1990: 206). A number of ethnographers have made valuable contributions by using participant- observation methods to monitor the individual's assimilation into the gang, but only a handful have followed their informants for extended periods of time or relocated their informants to chart progress and mobility. Although in those instances where longitudinal research designs *have* been employed, great strides have been made in our theories of gangs and delinquency (Hagedorn 1996, Moore 1991), there remains the need to test basic theories and hypotheses concerning the significance of long-term gang involvement.

In this article, we report results from a study designed to address the link between early, adolescent exposure to corporate gang activity, and later criminal justice, economic, and social outcomes. Our research study incorporates a multi-methodological, longitudinal framework in order to compare the social and behavioral outcomes of young people with active gang involvement and their non-gang affiliated counterparts. Our sample is taken from a concentrated poor, predominantly African-American community that has had a street gang presence for nearly four decades. With these data, we are able to analyze some questions that have not been previously addressed regarding the consequence of early involvement in corporate gang activity. Ideally, a comparison of non-gang and gang-affiliated persons would be best addressed by a prospective study that followed individuals over time; this retrospective-based research design of one urban poor neighborhood makes some key advances in our knowledge of future impacts of gang involvement, but it must be supplemented by other prospective, multi-methodological longitudinal research studies.

A Literature Review of Aging in the Street Gang

The importance of time

Researchers of street gangs have understood the importance of developmental pathways and socialization processes since the early twentieth century, when Frederic Thrasher conducted his seminal work on the urban gang. Thrasher saw the gang as a significant peer influence for adolescents, particularly for those who lived in working class "interstitial areas" of the city. The gang played a key role in their socialization, although it's effects diminished in the transition to adulthood. Thrasher found that the social networks of gang members could remain in existence after they left the gang, but that the tie of "gang member" often gave way to one based on friendship, political alliance, commerce, or another social relation. Thrasher portrayed the gang as being in "continuous flux and flow," with constantly shifting internal alliances, membership and participatory structures, although there was identifiable stability in the types of areas that promoted gangs and the spheres of activity in which the gang was involved.

Subsequent scholars affirmed the gang's dynamism and reaffirmed the temporal nature of gang involvement. However, the emphasis on temporality varied considerably. From the 1920s to the early 1960s, street gangs were portrayed as loose-knit, locally-based peer networks engaged in various forms of delinquent activity, not highly organized criminal entities defined by their longevity or organizational cohesion (Drake and Cayton 1945). "The major theorists and researchers of gangs in the 1950s and 1960s viewed the delinquent gang and the delinquent group as equivalent or synonymous" (Spergel 1990: 179-180). In this period, research focusing on dynamic aspects of gangland typically focused on the recruitment stage, particularly on rites of passage and individual decisions to join the gang. Scholars introduced the role of "culture" and "subculture"—in addition to the community-level social control factors highlighted by human ecologists—as key variables that determined whether and how individuals decided to pursue gang membership. These studies did not consider in any great detail the longitudinal nature of gang involvement—either collectively or among individual members— or the long-term social and behavioral outcomes of membership per se. Instead, their focus was on individuals' affinity for the delinquent lifestyle and the liminal period in which budding individual interest in the gang translates into a decision to join.

After the mid-1960s, scholarly interest in the gang shifted, primarily in response to the more militant, politicized posture of the large, minority, urban gang variant—which became the ostensible object of study. There were spirited calls (c.f., Klein 1971) to explain the novel participation of adolescents in hitherto adult activities (e.g., organized crime, grassroots political mobilization). Ultimately, however, a concern with identifying life-course trajectories, transitions, and outcomes did not transpire. Instead, the concern with prolonged periods of gang involvement manifested as part of the overall need to establish a more consistent, systematic definition of the gang (Definitional clarity would help to differentiate the etiology of the gang from that of other delinquent groups and thereby facilitate more effective policy intervention and law enforcement (Cohen 1969)). The specificity of gang activity was established temporally, specifically with respect to the duration of individual involvement in delinquent activity. That is, gang members differed from delinquent group members because of their sustained, non-fleeting involvement in marginal, illicit, and/or outlawed activity (Klein 1971:111)—irrespective of whether they received explicit group sanction. Alternatively, persistence of involvement could be cultural, namely a product of the gang's history of self-recognition: e.g., the gang differed because it had a "a tradition often of turf, colors, signs, and symbols" (Curry and Spergel 1988, emphasis added). With a few exceptions, however, scholars continued to be relatively un-interested in tenures and trajectories of gang involvement (and their attendant consequences): the exceptions occurred in studies of Chicano and Hispanic gangs, the authors of which argued that there are inter-generational connections among members of these gangs and longstanding ties between gangs and their communities. These two factors ultimately lengthened the time period for an individual to be associated with the gang (Horowitz 1983). Although these studies were longitudinal, they could not speak to the consequences for individuals who sustained involvement as compared to their counterparts who did not.

The most recent, developed body of scholarship, the so-called "underclass school" of gang research, has paid more attention to issues of longevity, both in terms of individual involvement and the capacity of groups to sustain themselves over time. As in the late 1960s, the redirection of intellectual energies partially reflects the changes to the gang itself, such that the gang inhabiting concentrated poverty, "socially isolated" urban neighborhoods garners the greatest attention (Wilson 1987). Spergel captures succinctly the widely-accepted interpretation of the gang's most recent transformation when he writes that, "Changing labor market conditions in the 1960s and 1970s, especially the decrease of low-skilled manufacturing jobs, made it difficult for older gang youth to find legitimate employment and leave the teenage gang" (Spergel 1995: 45). In other words, gang members lost a conventional means of "exiting" from the gang as they reached their young adult years—namely, the blue-collar, manufacturing job. Members stayed in the gang

for longer periods and used the gang for social as well as economic purposes, both of which had important implications for theories of gang involvement as well as social policies intent on prevention and intervention.

Although researchers have identified a more diverse age profile of contemporary (urban) gangs, there are a limited number of studies that have shed light on the factors promoting individual retention in gang activity and the contours of changes and continuity of gang involvement over time. Some ethnographic studies, whose participant-observation methods facilitate the study of individual participatory trajectories, have focused primarily on the gang's leadership segments; none of these have sought to compare their members with others in the respective fieldsite areas (Hagedorn 1998, Venkatesh and Levitt 2000). Other participant-observation research, based on the rank-and-file membership, has illuminated the period of exit from the gang (Padilla 1992, Decker and Van Winkle 1996); however, these studies have also not documented systematically the differences in outcomes between gang members and their non-gang affiliated counterparts. The non-ethnographic studies of the temporal dimension of gang involvement have concentrated on the 'first' and 'last' moments of gang involvement, i.e., the moment of entree and the moment of final exit.

The tendency to focus on entry and exit is the product of several factors. First, the study of gang activity has been consistently framed by a social problems framework: how to stop individuals from joining gangs and finding the means to enable them to leave gangs dominate the social policy discussion. The needs of prevention and intervention have left comparatively little energy and resources for other lines of sociological inquiry, such as what happens in the intervening period between entree and exit (Jankowski 1991), the symbolic properties of gang sub-cultures, and organizational dynamics such as the problem of leadership, integration, and collective action (Levitt and Venkatesh 2000).

A second factor derives from the methodological difficulty of studying street gangs, particularly contemporary corporate variants that are involved in illegal, dangerous underground economic arenas. To understand the progression of gang involvement in a manner that does not rely on cross-sectional or panel data, researchers must be able to remain in contact with gang members over time and to incorporate methods of cross-checking and validity for the data that is collected. The gang member populace, as well as their young, inner-city counterparts, often lead unstable lives, thereby rendering difficult ongoing tracking and monitoring as well as the development of a longitudinal research design; moreover, it is often noted that gang members (and perhaps teens and youth generally) will exaggerate their involvement in risqué activities when speaking with researchers. These methodological constraints have led to the disproportionate use of survey, single-interview, and short ethnographic studies of gang members that do not continuously track individual development. Summarily stated, basic questions remain concerning the activities (if any) that differentially involve adolescents and young adult gang members, the relations among different age cohorts within any gang faction, the trajectories of individual membership, and the eventual consequences for individuals who decide to maintain an active affiliation with the gang into their young adult years. Does gang involvement matter, and how?

Data and Field Methods

The data collection for the study began in 1990 when we gathered information on the activities of all households living in a large Chicago public housing development community. The community is an extreme example of an urban "underclass" community. Since the mid-1970s, the community has been characterized by extreme socio-economic disadvantage and an eviscerated institutional infrastructure. Built in the 1960s, the community initially had a mixture of working and non-working families, but by the dawn of the seventies, it adopted a profile of majority unemployed households (roughly 75% in the seventies, rising to 94% in 1991). The average household income in 1990-1991 was $6700.00— among the poorest urban neighborhoods in the nation. In the period 1990-1995, when the most intensive ethnographic observation of youth was conducted, homicide rates in the census tracts encompassing the housing project were over 100 per 100,000 annually—more than ten times greater than the national average. Residents of the community are almost exclusively African-American. At the time of the study, a powerful street gang exercised monopoly power over local drug distribution, extortion, and the sale of stolen property.

In early 1991, we documented 118 male youth between the ages of 16 and 26 who lived inside the housing development fieldsite. Of these 118, 38 were active participants in gang activities; the remaining 80 were not.[1] Since 1990, we have used ethnographic techniques to monitor the growth and development of these individuals, although the bulk of our efforts were directed at gang members. In 2000, we launched an

extensive data collection effort to find all living members of the sample and reconstruct their economic and social histories. We succeeded in locating 105 of the 118 members of the original sample. Eleven of these men were confirmed dead (5 gang members and 6 non-gang). Of the 94 surviving members of the sample, all but four participated in the follow-up interview (1 gang member and 3 non-gang declined to participate).

For many of the statistical procedures, our study is limited by our small sample size. In those cases, we have sought to temper our conclusions. The strength of the sample is not its size, but the fact that it represents the entire potential pool of applicants to one street gang.

For almost all of the men in our sample, we have ethnographic data recorded in 1990-1991 on basic attributes of their household including, composition, involvement of household members in the underground economy, their relationships to local political elites, and their participation in community-based activities. Official school records and administrative data from the local housing authority were obtained at this time. From 1991-2000, we monitored the development of nearly all of the gang members in the sample, but did not exhaustively track the non-gang affiliated youth. One of us attempted to make contact, either by phone or in person, with members of the sample three or four times each year. Our data collection in 2000 obtained extensive self-reported information on employment, education, criminal justice, and social outcomes; these quantitative measures are supplemented by hours of open-ended interviews and field observations that document the life experiences of the young men.

As a result of the incorporation of ethnographic and survey methods, this data set includes several types of information. Data on economic, criminal justice, and social outcomes are based primarily on self-reports provided in structured interviews conducted in the year 2000; in some cases, ethnographic data obtained in the 1991-2000 period was available to supplement this information and to provide checks on the validity of the informants' survey responses. By using our contact with adult members of the community, including parents, teachers, pastors and community stakeholders, we have tried to verify informants' responses wherever possible with supplementary interviews of other community members. Gang status and whether a subject's primary guardian used cocaine are based on field notes from 1991 and consultation with community members, including local gang leaders. Official school records are supplemented by self-reports by informants of their educational histories from 1991-2000.

The Corporate Gang as a Socializing Institution?

Hypotheses regarding the impact of involvement in contemporary "corporate" street gangs are motivated by William Julius Wilson's argument that inner-city youth have been deleteriously affected by the decimation of the central city employment base and the evisceration of its institutional sector. These youth are "socially isolated" from the mainstream and face an up-hill battle as they seek to develop human and social capital through education, employment-based skill enhancement, exposure to—an connections with-- other working families, and reduced exposure to criminality. Wilson's general observation carries a number of implications for the study of gang involvement. If inner-city youth suffer a tenuous relationship to mainstream institutions, then heightened involvement in a street-based organization that stands in opposition to the state, that promotes non-sanctioned means of mobility, and that adopts violent and dangerous means of sustaining its economic activities would presumably exacerbate the already low social status of youth who chose to be members. In other words, based on Wilson's theory, it is expected that individuals who choose to be active gang members fare worse in the long-term because the gang directs their energies away from socially legitimate arenas into illegitimate spheres of activity and, in so doing, decreases their capacity to make connections to schools, employers, churches and other institutions involved in social control and work-based advancement.

This question must be modified somewhat in order to deal with the specific attributes of the corporate gang as an organization promoting not only social gathering but also material gain in illicit street-based economic markets. We would expect that such underground economic involvement, by demanding a significant share of a person's time and energy, could potentially reduce their time for other legitimate activities. This would presumably increase their "isolation" from some institutions, specifically centers of employment and education, will promoting their exposure to, and contact with, others, specifically the criminal justice system. In other words, the corporate gang may be a socializing institution, such that the aging process is impacted and individuals begin to move in a direction that looks different than their peers who chose not to join the gang. Our data will seek to determine whether in fact the unique socialization experiences of gang involvement manifest in distinct long-term outcomes. However, it should be noted that we cannot make definitive statements on the distinctive socialization processes (if any) <u>per se</u> between gang

and non-gang affiliated youth. Our data will highlight the degree to which such distinct developmental trajectories may exist; we hope that future research could uncover the qualitative attributes of those pathways.

It is important to note that determining the impact of gang activity depends on understanding whether different types of individuals are motivated to join gangs in the first place. Some studies suggest that the ecological and demographic characteristics of gang members show a distinctly "hardened" profile, such that members' households are poorer and unstable and the neighborhoods in which they live are more distressed. However, in contexts of concentrated poverty and social isolation, these attributes could hold for wide segments of the population. Since not all of the households in such contexts will have individuals who eventually join gangs, the traits are not themselves sufficient for understanding the specific qualities of those who eventually become members.

Currently, there is not an identifiable consensus among researchers over the qualities of individuals who join contemporary, economically-oriented gangs. Since this research study does not place its emphasis on the moment of entree and the factors that push one or another youth to join the gang, it does not attempt to resolve this debate. For example, we did not implement a battery of psychological tests to measure whether gang members suffer deficits in intelligence and a "social Darwinist" mindset (Jankowski 1991). Moreover, the study is based in a community in which nearly all of the households are unemployed and cite public assistance as their sole form of income, thus, it does not permit an analysis of whether children living in the poorer households of a neighborhood join gangs; they are all, by definition, extremely poor. However, given the near ubiquity of poverty among households in the fieldsite, this study is able to control for the effects of household socio-economic status. So, in order to assess whether gang members exhibited any significant differences from their non-gang peers at the period in which decisions are made to join the local gang, we are able to consider a number of other factors thought to distinguish the profile of gang members. While we focus on some conventional variables, such as number of parents and siblings in the home, we also look at the unreported employment status of parents/guardians, i.e., whether they were working but not reporting their income, and we assess the impact of the use of drugs in the home by a guardian. These attributes are accompanied by individual-level attributes including, educational background, employment status, and aspirations of the future, in order to form a baseline assessment of the gang and non-gang affiliated population.

After noting significant background differences among the two subgroups, the bulk our analysis will be directed toward understanding the impact of the post-decision making phase, when individuals have generally committed themselves to the gang, or not. Whether and the degree to which this decision is followed by some distinctive socialization experiences for the two subgroups is assessed in this study by four key outcomes: educational, employment, marriage and household formation, and criminal involvement. If the corporate gang were to demand greater time and energy from its members and, simultaneously, if individuals in the gang are engaging actively in both risky economic practices and social activities, we would expect members to experience some differences, relative to their peers who choose not to pursue involvement, in terms of educational pursuits, work histories, participation in crime as well as tenure in jail and prison, and relationship to the domicile. It may also be the case that, after extensive involvement in a group defined by its meaningful embrace of an oppositional perspective, gang members express distinct views on society, including perceptions of future life-chances of social advancement and their faith in the American social system.

Social Outcomes of Gang Involvement

Background Characteristics

All of the youth in the sample have grown up in an extremely poor household and in the same socially isolated community; even if one took into account un-reported or illegal household earnings for those families able to obtain such work, their household income would not be far above the poverty line. The ethnographic data in the project suggests that nearly 75 percent of the families had persons in the household who brought unreported income to the home; however, this pattern was highly sporadic and irregular, such that households could not depend on unreported income as a reliable resource to make ends meet. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the low socioeconomic status of the sample is ubiquitous. The exceptions arise for parents who may have been employed at the time—this is addressed below in terms of any determinative effect that that may result.

In terms of general background characteristics, gang members are slightly younger than non-gang members in our sample. However, this most likely reflects the increase in gang activity that coincided with the expansion of the crack-cocaine market in the late 1980s and early 1990s. By that time, the older members in our sample were in their early to mid-twenties and thus less likely to join the gang if they had not done so already (Decisions to join in this community are between 14-18 years). Nearly the entire sample lived with their mother when growing up (90 percent), which did not differ by gang affiliation. Gang members were less likely to have a father present in the home (10 versus 16 percent), less likely to be employed in the legitimate economy in 1991 (41 versus 46 percent), and had greater number of siblings (3.3 versus 2.8) in their pre-adult years, but none of these differences were statistically significant.

The noteworthy differences between the two samples are the average 9th Grade Point Average (GPA)[ii] and the percentage of the two samples that grew up with a primary guardian that used cocaine. Gang members had a greater percentage of mothers using cocaine (31 percent versus 13 percent) and they had, on average, lower GPAs (1.6 versus 2.2). When combined with other characteristics—whose differences between gang and non-gang affiliated members are not significant-- an overall picture emerges that suggests that gang members are living in more unstable households relative to the overall community population. (In the remainder of the paper, we separate out the background characteristics for those who were more likely to come of age in the gang during the height of the crack-cocaine epidemic. This subgroup of males 18 years of age and under in 1991 is thought to have experienced relatively unique socialization experiences relative to their peers who are slightly older. The significant differences between gang and non-gang affiliated individuals remain in effect within each of the two cohorts).

In terms of aspirations and outlooks, there are few differences between gang and non-gang members. Both shared relatively conventional goals in terms of their desires for mobility and social advancement. Both groups cite the need to leave public housing, to form a nuclear family, and to procure a modest blue-collar or moderate-income white collar job as top priorities. Although gang members are somewhat distinct in their views that the gang affords a legitimate space for material gain otherwise unavailable to minority, poor people living in urban America, both groups allude to concrete, systematic structures of racism and discrimination that make their advancement difficult. Both also express deep frustrations with the educational system and local job markets—gang members being slightly different in terms of their belief that participation in socially *illegitimate* avenues is warranted given the structural blockages in existence.

Criminal Justice Outcomes

Ethnographic studies argue that gang members involved in underground economies come into frequent contact with the criminal justice system because of their involvement in drug trafficking and inter-gang rivalries. Our findings find support for this general claim. In general, gang members are about ten times more likely to ever have been imprisoned (p-value=0.05), a result which remains in effect even after controlling for other factors. However, it should be noted that a higher 9th grade GPA can significantly reduce an individual's likelihood of becoming imprisoned; indeed, each additional unit increase in GPA reduces the likelihood of imprisonment by 67 percent. Self-reported arrest data also reveals differences between gang and non-gang members; these differences are best understood when we separate out cohorts that have different propensities for criminal behavior by virtue of their age. When we examine the younger population (between 14-21 in 1991) who are more involved in the day-to-day street-level trafficking—and who thereby have greater exposure to law enforcement agencies and to community members who may report their behavior, significant differences emerge. In this younger cohort, gang members are significantly more likely to be arrested at this period of their lives for violent crime (roughly 5 times more) and for drug trafficking (8 times more) than their non-gang peers. For the older cohort, data limitations prevent similar tests from being conducted—specifically, there is not enough variability in the sample to test for drug arrests or violent crime arrests differences; also, the relevant sub-sample is too small.[iii]

Those who left the gang experience significantly fewer arrest for violent crime (p-value=.02)—there are no correlative differences for drug arrests or for years imprisoned. Indeed, researchers suggest that not only exit from the gang, but other life-course decisions may also reduce the likelihood of arrest and imprisonment. Our data suggests that getting married does not prove to be significant in terms of lowering the likelihood of arrest or, rates and tenure of imprisonment, either for gang and non-gang members.

However, acquiring increased education appears to be the most important step that individuals can take to reduce their exposure to the criminal justice system. The effect of education was tested among the sub-sample of those who were 18 years of age or older in 1991. We isolated this sample because they had at

least ten years after the age at which they are expected to graduate in order to return to fulfill their requirements for a high school diploma. Within this cohort, as they grow older, individuals are far less likely to be involved in violent crime or drug activity—e.g., their arrest rates for violent crime are reduced by 75% for each additional year of aging. Controlling for age, those who did return to successfully complete a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree were less likely to be arrested for either drug trafficking or violent crime—these results hold for the younger cohort as well. In addition, individuals in the older cohort who did not return to complete their education are 27 times more likely to ever be imprisoned (p-value=.02), which is a significantly higher rate than their peers who either returned to high school or successfully passed a G.E.D. examination—they also spend longer time in prison (the extended tenure in prison among those who do not return to complete additional education holds for the younger cohort as well).

As an important aside, for all individuals in our sample, exposure to drugs in the home—specifically, having at least one parent who is actively using crack cocaine—can lead to greater likelihood for drug arrests; those with a mother on crack are five times more likely to be arrested for drugs. In addition, among those who were ever imprisoned, those with a mother using cocaine spent one year more in prison, on average, controlling for everything else.

Work and Education

For the overall population, there is not a significant difference between gang and non-gang affiliated individuals in terms of obtaining a high school diploma when controlling for other factors. However, gang members do have significantly fewer years of education, on the whole, than their counterparts who eschewed gang membership. We continue to separate out individuals 18 years and under in 1991 from those over 18, in order to isolate an older cohort that, in theory, should have completed their education at the time we began the study. Neither gang affiliation nor any other variable significantly determine future educational attainment for either the younger or older cohort. This finding should be combined with the above results that posited the importance of returning to complete a high school education in the young adult stage of life (viz. reductions in criminal involvement). In other words, it appears that, during the teenage years, the primary determinant of future educational achievement is 9th grade GPA; that is, people with higher GPAs are likely to complete a high school education, regardless of gang affiliation. However, irrespective of gang involvement, for those moving into their young adult period, overall social outcomes may be improved by returning to complete a high school education (or its equivalent, a G.E.D.).

The importance of educational achievement is reaffirmed in terms of the social determinants of work and employment. In general, increases in education are important for improving an individual's social mobility, such that each year of additional education makes one twice as likely to be legally employed in 2000, *ceteris paribus*. Each additional year of education adds $4500, on average, to an individual's overall income (p-value=0.000), which includes both legal and illegal sources of income (p-value= 0.0001); it is important to note that the determinative effect of initial GPA was overridden once education is placed in the model. Acquiring greater education can also significantly boost per hour wages; each additional year of education adds $0.83 to an individual's hourly wage (p-value=0.02). This would imply that, for both gang and non-gang members, those who return to complete additional education may increase their likelihood of earning future income, even if their initial 9th grade GPA was low.[iv]

Marriage is a significant life course decision vis-à-vis individual earnings. People who became married between 1991-2000 earn $6500 per year more than their counterparts did not change their marital status (p-value=0.04). Marriage becomes even more important for future earnings on the subgroup that, in our sample, are most involved in drug trafficking. That is, single adolescents and youth in 1991 (under 22 years of age) had the greatest involvement in day-to-day street distribution of drugs; in this sub-sample, those who became married eventually earned roughly $8000.00 more per year, legal and illegal wages combined, than their counterparts who remained single. They also earned significantly greater legal income than their counterparts (p-value=.025).

Income from legal and illegal sources may be analyzed separately, with the expectation that members of the corporate gang will have greater likelihood of earning illegitimate income. Our data enables us to test this hypothesis as well as the currently-untested hypothesis of the relative differences in terms of legally earned income. We find that education (p-value=0.0001) is a significant determinant of *legal* income as is gang affiliation (p-value=0.05), such that non gang members earn significantly greater legal income.

Since the portion of the sample under 18 in 1991 had less time to earn income, we again separate them from than their peers 19 years and above. When we examine the older cohort, 19 years and older, in isolation, as expected, those with gang affiliation earned significantly less *legal* income--roughly $8300 per year-- and earned significantly greater *illegal* income (p-value=.007). For both samples, our results suggest that gang members may be distinguished from their non-gang counterparts by virtue of their increased involvement in the underground economic sphere. It appears that the social and human capital development for gang members involves illegal economies to a significant degree.

Perhaps the most significant pattern that is revealed is the importance of education in determining individual outcomes. Within the older cohort, 19 years and above, individuals who had *not* completed 12 years of education are less likely to be employed than their counterparts who completed a high school education or who returned to receive an equivalent diploma. Those who did not return to complete 12 years of education also suffered a $10,000 drop in average yearly legal income as a result (p-value=0.001; see table work.leginc.3). This is not an insubstantial figure given that this population is at the low end of the wage scale. Moreover, as noted above, the subgroup that failed to complete 12 years of education has a much greater exposure to narcotics and violent crime, and to the criminal justice system. In sum, the results suggest that a decision to complete a high school equivalency degree can be an important one in improving one's general social standing.

Marriage and Household formation

To date, there has been no systematic study of the patterns of family formation and attitudes toward marriage and family among male street gang members as there has been among female members. In particular, it is not known whether rates of marriage and fatherhood, as well as general care and responsibility for household-related affairs, are different for gang members who spend a significant portion of their young adult years laboring in the underground economy. Our data suggests that gang members do report spending greater time away from family members, but that among single people, the gang and non-gang affiliated subgroups not have statistically different rates of marital outcomes.

Part of our inquiry also includes an examination of the relationship between tenure in the gang (measured below in number of years) and the capacity to ensure productive social outcomes. Phrased less abstractly, we ask, "Does it matter how long one is an active member of a corporate gang?"

Our ethnographic data suggested that individuals turn to the gang and its opportunities to earn illegal revenue in order to realize fairly conventional goals, such as forming an independent nuclear family. Many members perceive the gang to be an opportunity for temporary income generation, until a more stable job can be found. This view is rarely expressed among non-gang members, namely, that the underground economy is a viable means of beginning the path toward independence; in fact, many non-gang members view the underground economy as an obstacle to social advancement because it can lead to a criminal record and less time for education and development of skills. Both gang and non-gang affiliates do share the belief that any path to success necessitates leaving the "projects," i.e., moving out of the housing development and into private market neighborhoods. Below, we gauge whether there are, in actuality, different rates of leaving the "projects" for gang and non-gang members.

Individuals who were married in the year 2000 had a greater total income on average than those who remained single or who were divorced (p-value=0.034). Moreover, among individuals who were single in 1991, those who became married in the 1991-2000 period had a higher average income—about $7000 (p-value=0.023)—than their counterparts who remained single. The latter finding would indicate that marriage is a significant intervention in the lives of youth in this community.

While the ethnographic data suggests that gang and non-gang members differ slightly in terms of expectations of future outcomes, the statistical analysis suggests that there appear to be minimal differences between the two sub-groups in terms of commitments to fatherhood and participation in marriage. Single gang members do not get married more often than single non-gang members. It is also clear that there is not a difference between the two groups in their willingness to pay child support. For those individuals who *are* paying child support, which comprises only 49% of the total sample, there is no significant difference in terms of which population, gang or non-gang affiliates, are adhering to this responsibility. Gang members also are not less likely to live with their children, nor are they less likely to see their out-of-home children.

Our initial tests showed that gang and non-gang members exhibit differences in terms of their geographic mobility. That is, our bi-variate analyses showed that a higher percentage of gang members remained tenants of public housing; in fact, however, only increased education, coupled with being

employed ten years ago, significantly reduced the likelihood that an individual would remain in the housing development—gang affiliation no longer held significance in multivariate analyses. Leaving the gang in the young adult years did not necessarily mean that the individual left the housing development in which they grew up. That is, in the sample of gang-affiliated individuals, the proportion of people who left the housing development was the same among current gang affiliates as well as among ex-gang members.

There is no significant difference in terms of any of the criminal justice, educational, employment or social outcomes associated with length of tenure in the gang. If an individual remains in the gang for longer than one year, the point at which the commitment to the organization is made for certain, the likelihood of reducing contact with jails and prisons, or of increasing wages, and so on, does not depend on how long the individual remains a gang member. Moreover, none of the independent variables that have been incorporated in this study can significantly predict duration of stay in the gang—these include years of education, employment and work experiences, initial GPA, age, and parental use of cocaine.

Discussion

This paper has examined a longstanding question in the study of American street gangs: namely, does gang involvement have long-term consequences for individual social outcomes. Our data suggests that gang involvement can deleteriously impact adolescent and young adult development. In particular gang members have greater exposure to the criminal justice system and their future income tends to derive disproportionately from illegal sources—as compared with their non-gang counterparts who may be involved in socially legitimated work.

However, these results should be interpreted cautiously for two reasons. First, gang members appear to come from more troubled home environments at early points in their adolescent development. The causal impact of the gang, while manifesting in terms of future criminal justice and earnings-related outcomes, must be interpreted cautiously in order to reflect the unstable domestic situations that gang members confront at the time they make decisions to join gangs. Second, our data provide some evidence that the gang may be a socializing institution; however, since our data were derived retrospectively, we cannot isolate the actual developmental trajectories, if any, that separate gang and non-gang affiliated individuals.

We hope that this research will spark further inquiry into the specific organizational and socialization dimensions of the contemporary urban street gang. In particular, multi-methodological approaches are necessary to fully understand the structure and texture of corporate gang activity. Future studies that look in depth into socialization experiences and development trajectories must include a comparative analysis of gang and non-gang peers.

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Those who have only a nominal social affiliation with the gang, or who are actively involved in the gang for a short period of time before withdrawing, are classified as non-gang in our analysis. As of our follow-up survey in 2000, only a handful of those who had once been active in the gang were currently active under this definition.

[ii] This was formed by averaging the grades of their primary four high school classes: social studies, science, mathematics, and English.

[iii] We address the criticism that perhaps gang members are more likely to be arrested and/or imprisoned at one or another age. We find no interaction effects, such that the rate of arrests and imprisonment does not vary by age.

[iv] This result holds after testing for potential interaction effects between education and age, and education and GPA. That is, it is not the case that individuals at specific ages or specific educational levels are the ones significantly contributing to the increases in income.

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